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A Third Analysis of
Officer Resignation
from the
Royal Australian Navy

by

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16 Abstract Since 1982 all officers resigning from the Royal Australian Navy have been asked to complete the Officer Resignation Questionnaire (ORQ). In the present study ORQ response patterns from two resigning cohorts, one from 1985 and the other from 1988 are compared and conclusions drawn wherever apposite. <i>Keywords: Attrition, personnel retention.</i> (KR)			

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Abstract

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Demographics

1. Since 1985 a marked increase in resignation rate is visible amongst those in their 21st to 25th years of service. (see p6 para 3 (c) for details).
2. About 28% of officers have provided 20+ years of service. The resignation rate for this sub-sample is 60% (see table 6A).
3. The lowest resignation rate is visible amongst those serving in their 13th to 19th years (7%).
4. There is a tendency for the resignation rate of younger officers (<35 years) to have fallen since 1985. The resignation rate for older officers appears to have increased.
5. There has been a 19% drop in the resignation rate of Lieutenants since 1985 accompanied by a rise of 7% - 8% in the resignation rates for Commanders and Lieutenant Commanders.
6. 1988 resignations from the General list are up 9% from the 1985 figures and SL rates are down by 7% over the same period.
7. 12% of the 1988 resigning cohort had been promoted over the previous two years compared with 49% of the 1987 serving officer sample.
8. Since 1985 there appears to have been an increase in the number of officers possessing tertiary educational qualifications and a decrease of those holding secondary level education only.
9. House ownership amongst the 1988 resigning cohort approached the level found in the civilian population.

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Introduction

Two earlier reports by the present writer (1985 a, b) dwelt upon the demographic and attitudinal characteristics of a sample of 212 male officers of the Royal Australian Navy who had completed the Officer Resignation Questionnaire (ORQ) over the period 1981 to 1984.

The first report was purely descriptive and revealed that two of the most heavily endorsed influences upon resignation were the prospects of future unattractive postings and the desire to live in one location. This study also established baseline data, some of which are central to the present analysis. The second reported an analysis of the original data by age. The total sample was divided into two at the 30 year point. Unique response patterns for each resultant subsample were established. As a result it was speculated that it might be possible to produce profiles which could assist management to identify officers who might be at high risk of succumbing to known resignation influences (1985, b).

An opportunity to test the idea was presented upon the implementation of the Royal Australian Navy Officer Retention Survey in 1987/88 with which the present writer was associated. A Resignation Propensity Scale resulted which was subsequently validated and handed to the Director of Naval Officer Postings (DNOP) for use by management for predicting individual officer resignation, overall resignation rates and as a vehicle for future morale surveys. (Salas 1988 a, b).

The Retention Survey data have been included in the present report whenever possible as representing serving attitudes and as an acceptable substitute for the "borne" position on any particular variable.

Method

The present study reports response frequencies and percentages to items of the ORQ made by 193 male, resigning, RAN officers across a time interval from 1986 to 1988. Tables are constructed so that response patterns of the 1988 cohort can be compared with the 1985 resigning cohort on any item. Retention Survey data are included in tables wherever possible, labelled "1987 Serving".

Comments are interspersed where points of interest are apparent. No comment is made when the tabular information appears self-evident.

Procedure

Data are presented as per the structure of the ORQ (see Annex 1). i.e. Demographic variables are covered in Section 1. Possible reasons for resignation are discussed in Section 2.

Aim

1. To compare the 1985 and the 1988 resigning cohorts and to plot and discuss differentials in the response patterns to the ORQ items.
2. To draw conclusions where possible.

Notes

1. In some tables demographic variables with very low frequencies are omitted.
2. Percentages for the most part are calculated on an n of 193 for the 1988 resigning cohort, 212 for the 1985 cohort and 1434 for the 1987 serving sample.
3. Rounding effects may slightly vary some total percentages from 100.

Response Rates

That for the 1985 cohort was estimated at "about 50 percent".

That for the 1988 was 67 percent, an improvement due to tightened administrative procedures.

RESULTS

Officer Resignation Questionnaire
1985 and 1988 Cohorts
plus the 1987 Officer Retention Survey (Serving) Sample
Item response frequencies and percentages

Table 1

Section 1 Item 4			Time since last promotion		
Years	Resigners*		Serving		
	1988	f	%	1987	
0-2	24	12		700	49
3-4	46	24		325	23
5	19	10		138	9
6-7	52	27		156	11
8	21	11		25	2
8+	26	13		18	1
Missing	5	3		76	5

*1985 data are not comparable for this item.

Approximately half (46%) of the 1988 resigning cohort reported having been promoted over the preceding 5 years.

The mean time since promotion was 6 years for the resigners with a range of 0 to 15 years.

Forty nine percent of the serving sample had been promoted over the previous two years compared with 12 percent of the resigners over the same period.

The promotion variable is a recognized factor in the calculation of officer resignation propensity (Salas, 1988,b).

Table 2

Age	Item 5		Age			
	1988		1987		1985	
	Resigners	Serving	f	%	f	%
21-25	10	5	196	14	15	7
26-30	34	18	323	22	57	27
31-35	25	13	296	21	23	11
36-40	61	31	311	22	58	27
41-45	40	21	190	13	35	17
46-50	17	9	88	6	12	6
50+	6	3	24	2	10	5

1988 resignations in the 26 to 30 age group are down on those in the 1985 cohort by 9 percent.

Those in most other age brackets are up by roughly 4 percent in 1988. About one third of the 1988 resigners are from the 36-40 age bracket.

Over half of the 1988 resigners came from the 36-45 age range (32+21=53%). In the 1985 cohort the figure for this age range was 44 percent.

It is concluded from the above data that there is a tendency for the resignation rate of younger officers (up to 35 years) to have fallen or remained about the same whereas that for older officers seems to have increased since the 1985 period.

Table 3

Item 6	Branch of Service							
	1988		1988		1985		1985	
	Resigners	f	%	Borne*	f	%	Resigners	Borne
Seaman	76	39		1179	53		79	38
Engineering	45	23		427	19		56	27
Supply	13	7		283	13		24	12
Instructor	16	8		158	7		6	3
Other	28	15		174	8		10	5
Missing	15	8		-	-		31	15

* From DNMP

With percentages of each Branch borne being very similar in both cohorts the resignation rate appears to have remained more or less stationary for Seaman officers. The Instructor rate appears to have risen by about 5 percent since the 1985 period and Engineering and Supply rates have fallen by about 4 percent.

Table 4

Item 10		Substantive Rank							
Rank	Resigners	1988		1987		1985		1985	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
CMDR	48	25		320	14	35	17	-	12
LCDR	72	37		592	27	64	30	-	27
LEUT	58	30		865	39	104	49	-	37
SBLT	5	3		311	14	7	3	-	18

1988 resignation rates amongst Commanders and Lieutenant Commanders appear to be up on the 1985 proportions. Lieutenants now seem to be staying longer and the rate for Sub-Lieutenants appears not to have changed since 1985. With the percentage of each rank borne being roughly the same between 1985 and 1988 the most notable feature of the above table appears to be the 19 percent drop in the resignation rate of Lieutenants.

Table 5

Item 3		Length of Service					
Years	Resigners	1988		1987		1985	
		f	%	f	%	f	%
0-5	7	4		149	10	30	14
6-10	28	15		390	27	50	24
11-15	36	19		256	18	22	10
16-20	14	7		308	22	31	15
21-25	74	38		205	14	46	22
26-30	22	11		76	5	23	11
31-35	8	4		34	2	8	4
35+	4	2		9	1 Missing 2	1	

The mean year of resignation is 20 and the modal year 22.

The variations disclosed by comparing the two resigning cohorts within these length of service intervals suggest that 1988 resignations amongst those in the first 10 years of service are down by 10 percent compared with 1985.

For a period after this (11-20 years) rises and falls in resignations tend to cancel each other out. Then occurs a striking increase in resignations in the 21 to 25 service time interval from 22 percent in 1985 to 38 percent in 1988 - a leap of 16 percent.

The general trend appears to support the age data in Table 2 above.

Comparing the 1988 and 1985 resigning cohorts enabled the following observations to be made:

- a. The resignations in the 0-5 and the 6-10 years of service appear to be down in 1988 by about 10 percent on 1985;
- b. Rises and falls in resignation rates over the years 11-20 appear to cancel each other out in the 1985 and 1988 cohorts;
- c. A striking increase in resignation rates between the 1985 and 1988 cohorts occurs in the 21-25 years bracket. This is of the order of 16 percent and represents a jump of about 30 percent from the preceding service interval of 16 to 20 years in 1988 (7% to 38%). In 1985 this jump was only about 7 percent (15% to 22%).

Results of an analysis of data from the Naval Officer Retention Survey, 1987, led the present writer to espouse the likely value of expressing length of service data in intervals different from the convention used in Table 5 above. One of the results of this analysis was the detection of a period of comparatively slow resignation thinking and resignation activity across the 13th, 14th and 15 years of service (Salas, 1989 b, in press). It was decided to regroup the data from the 1988 resigning cohort to test for the possible existence of this effect. Table 6 below reveals the results.

This phenomenon is of particular interest in the light of the findings of Jans (1985). He found that officers in the years of service from 14 to 19 (Middle Career) tended to be affected by a crisis of sorts characterized by less positive attitudes towards further service (career motivation), less commitment to the Service and a generalized disenchantment compared with attitudes towards the Service held in earlier stages.

Whatever the reality of these findings, and the present writer has produced results which question them (Salas, 1989a), the outcome is certainly not reflected in correspondingly high resignation activity in Middle Career as the present results testify; quite the opposite, due no doubt to looming pension benefits.

Future career stage data resulting from ORQ analyses are likely to be reported in the time intervals used in Table 6. For heuristic purposes these do not, however, represent the final position. There is evidence (Salas, 1985, summary, A15) that the 20 to 24 year service time interval may represent a unique period in officer resignation behaviour and it is likely that modifications to data sorting will be made to accommodate this, if warranted by further research.

However, to maintain continuity, the original 5 year service time intervals (Table 5) will continue to feature so that longer term comparisons can be made between resigning cohorts.

Table 7

Item 8	Current Job					
	1988		1987		1985	
	Resigners	Serving	Resigners	Serving	f	%
Ship	27	14	368	26	23	11
Shore	167	84	1070	74	176	84
Missing	3	2			11	5

The proportions over the successive periods above appear not to have changed.

Table 8

Item 9

	1988		1987		1985		1985
	Resigners		Serving		Resigners		Borne
	f	%	f	%	f	%	%
General	103	53	987	68	92	44	60
Supplementary	19	10	181	12	36	17	15
Special Duties	41	21	212	15	40	19	12
S.L. Instructor	15	8	23	2	-	-	-
Other	2	1	42	3	34	16	3
Missing	13	7	2	-	10	4	-

The main features in the above data are the increase in resignations from the General list (up 9 percent) and a reduction in those from the Supplementary List (down 7 percent).

Table 9

Item 11

	1988		1987		1985	
	Resigners		Serving		Resigners	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Secondary	104	54	790	55	127	60
Tertiary	84	43	644	45	82	39
Missing	5	3	4	-	-	-

A gradual shift is evident over the reference period involving the growth of a higher proportion holding tertiary qualifications and a reduction in the number of those officers educated to the secondary level only.

Table 10

Item 12

	1988		1987		1985	
	Resigners		Serving		Resigners	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Single	32	17	278	19	131	15
Married	155	80	1099	77	168	80
Other	6	3	60	4	9	4
Missing	-	-	1	-	-	-

No comment appears necessary. Marriage seems to remain the popular choice.

Table 11

Item 13	Number of Children by Age					
	1988		1985		f	%
0-5 years	f	%	f	%		
None	138	72	149	71		
One	28	14	42	20		
Two	23	12	16	8		
Three	-	2	2	1		
6-12 years	f	%	f	%	f	%
None	124	64	131	62		
One	38	20	25	12		
Two	25	13	41	20		
Three	5	3	12	6		
Four	1	-	Missing 1	-		
13-18 years	f	%	f	%	f	%
None	162	84	187	89		
One	13	7	12	6		
Two	12	6	5	2		
Three	5	3	3	1		
Four	-	-	2	1		
Five	1	-	Missing 1	-		

There are no suggested trends in the above table.

Table 12

Item 14	Do you own your own House?							
	1988			1987		1985		Resigners
	f	f	%	f	%	f	%	
Yes	135	70		832	58	138	66	Resigners
No	58	30		604	42	70	33	Serving
Missing	-	-				2	1	Resigners

The house ownership amongst resigners appears to be approaching that of the civilian population (73% in 1984).

Table 13

	Item 15					
	1988		1987		1985	
	Resigners		Serving		Resigners	
Yes	92	48	455	32	102	49
No	53	27	381	26	108	51
Missing	48	25	602	42		

Table 14

	Item 16					
	1988		1987		1985	
	Resigners		Serving		Resigners	
Yes	126	65			138	66
No	48	25	N/A		71	34
Unsure	19	10			-	-
Missing	-	-			1	-

Table 15

	Item 17					
	1988		1987		1985	
	Resigners		Serving		Resigners	
Self-employed	31	16	363	25	30	14
Public Service	33	17	190	13	38	18
Private						
Enterprise	72	38	735	50	67	32
Dont know	1	-	185	13	-	-
Not applicable	31	16	-	-	-	-
Missing	25	13	-	-	71	34
Other					4	2

Item 18

Table 16

Expected income from your new job.

	1988		1987		1985	
	Resigners		Serving		Resigners	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Current	43	22	26	2	61	29
Similar to						
Current	40	21	403	28	47	22
More than						
Current	36	19	597	41	44	21
Much more						
than Current	23	12	309	22	-	-
Not applicable	41	21	94	7	44	21
Missing	10	5	9	-	14	7

The 1985 data and the retention survey items were couched in terms of percentage of current gross salary rather than the above notation so that the 1988 and the 1985 retention data items are, strictly speaking, not equivalent. However if the "much more" section is excluded, reasonable comparisons are legitimate.

The results suggest that salary expectations were much the same in both resigning cohorts.

DNOP sources have recently included a further item in this section asking for details of fringe benefits expected. Response patterns will become available in due course.

The Retention Survey sample had nearly double the proportion of respondents requiring more than their current salary from any prospective civilian job leading to the observation that actual resigners might have a keener, more updated appreciation of labour market values than their serving brethren who also may well be perceiving further fields to be greener.

Be that as it may, the response patterns of the resigners support the results of studies of service or industrial separation, morale, job dissatisfaction etc. in that money as such, is rarely a high ranking causal factor. It usually appears well down in fourth or fifth position on the importance hierarchy.

Section 2

Reasons for Resignation

Single officers to ignore items 1 to 6

Table 17

Item 1 Effects of posting turbulence on spouses' education

Degree of Influence	1988		1987		1985	
	Resigners	Serving	Resigners	f	%	f
None	149	77	650	45	191	91
Some	17	9	496	34	16	8
Missing	27	14	292	21	2	1

The proportion reporting this factor as a resignation influence appears to have remained static over the two resigning samples. The apparent difference between those who report this factor as being of no influence is accounted for by the 14 percent of 1988 resigners who failed to respond to this item.

About four times the percentage of the serving sample (34%) report spouse's education as a likely resignation influence than do the resigners. Only one individual in the 1988 resigning cohort reported the factor as being of "most influence".

Comment

Whilst speculation has ranged freely concerning the effect of the developing assertiveness and awareness of officers' spouses in determining their own individual career and educational paths, this phenomenon is hardly reflected in officer response to the ORQ on this factor as a resignation determinant. (8 to 9 percent)

It might be contended that resigners are reluctant to admit to being influenced in this fashion, so far as terminating their own careers is concerned.

However, serving officers do not appear to be afflicted by any such reservations. As Table 17 above indicates, 34 percent report the spouse education factor as being of "some influence". (However only 19 serving individuals (1 percent) reported spouse education as being likely to be "most influence" in their resignation decision).

The contribution of the serving data lies in their providing an upper limit to the possible influence which this and other factors could have upon actual officer resignation.

Table 18

Degree of Influence	Item 2		Spouse's employment			
	1988		1987		1985	
	Resigners	Serving	Resigners		f	%
None	109	57	306	21	161	77
Some	57	30	850	59	46	22
Missing	27	14	282	20	-	-

There appears to be a rising proportion of resigners citing this variable as being of "some influence" in their resignation (22 percent to 30 percent between the cohorts). Of that 30 percent in 1988, 6 percent reported that it was a factor of "most influence" in their resignation. However, missing values from the 1988 cohort (14%) leave these data ambiguous.

Of the 59 percent of serving members who reported spouse's employment as being a factor of "some influence" in any likely resignation scenario, 5 percent said it would be of "most influence", a figure comparable to the 6 percent counterpart in the 1988 resignation cohort.

Data from the Retention Study showed that only 22 percent of RAN officers' wives did not work so that it is to be expected that out of the considerable proportion of employed wives, some jobs would be not negotiable in terms of likely member posting.

Whilst helping members make up perceived or actual salary shortfalls there is a reverse side to the coin. This is represented by reluctance of members spouses to move locations not only because of financial reasons but because of intrinsic job satisfaction including possible career aspects of the spouses' employment.

If future cohorts of resigning Naval officers were to show another 8 percent or greater jump in the frequency of this reported resignation influence the phenomenon might begin to become more seriously viewed than it might be at present.

Table 19

Item 3 Marital Harmony

Degree of Influence	1988		1987		1985	
	Resigners	Serving	Resigners	Serving	Resigners	Serving
f	%	f	%	f	%	f
None	97	50	301	10	113	54
Some	69	36	1045	70	94	45
Missing	27	14	275	20	-	-

As a factor influencing resignation the influence of posting turbulence appears to be of lesser reported concern to the 1988 cohort than the 1985 one (36 percent to 45 percent). However, 8 percent of the 1988 resigners report it as being of "most influence", (21 percent of serving members report it as being likely to be of "most influence"). Interpretation of the above statistics is open to speculation.

Table 20

Item 4 Childrens' Education

Degree of Influence	1988		1987		1985	
	Resigners	Serving	Resigners	Serving	Resigners	Serving
f	%	f	%	f	%	f
None	66	34	103	7	115	55
Some	82	43	869	61	92	44
Missing	45	23	466	32	-	-

The percentage of each resigning cohort reporting the effect of posting turbulence on their childrens' education as of "some influence" in the formulation of their decision to resign is roughly the same (43 to 44 percent).

This is the most weighty influence reported so far however with 17 percent of the 1988 cohort reporting that this variable was a "most important" influence in their decision to resign. Almost one third of the Retention cohort failed to respond to this item but over 80 percent of those who did saw childrens' education as being of some consequence to them in any likely resignation scenario.

Summary of the reported influence of posting turbulence upon four aspects of members' family lives.

Listing the four resignation influences in order of their magnitude in the two resigning cohorts sees "childrens' education" as by far the strongest in both cohorts and in the serving sample too. As well as being the most extensively reported, it also has the most intense influence with 17 percent of the 1988 cohort reporting this variable as being of "most influence" upon their resignation. There did not appear to be any increase in the extent of the influence of this factor since 1985.,

Marital harmony is next in general order of subscription magnitude across both cohorts but the effect is reported by a lesser proportion in the 1988 group.

Spouses' employment is third in importance as a resigning influence but it is reported with greater frequency in the 1988 cohort.

Finally, it appears that in contrast to the foregoing consequences of posting turbulence, the influence upon resignation of the spouses' educational efforts appears to be negligible.

Table 21

Degree of Influence	Item 6		Spouses' attitude to your RAN service					
	1988		1987		1985		Resigners	% Resigners
	f	%	f	%	f	%		
None	120	62	271	23	126	60		
Some	46	24	894	58	79	38		
Missing	27	14	273	19	5	2		

There appears to be a clear diminution in spouses' negative attitudes towards the Service as a resignation influence between the 1985 and 1988 resigning cohorts. However, missing values from the 1988 cohort (14%) leave these data ambiguous.

Table 22

Degree of Influence	Item 7		Desire to live in one location					
	1988		Serving		1985		Resigners	% Resigners
	f	%	f	%	f	%		
None	63	33	266	19	58	28		
Some	129	67	1166	77	151	72		
Missing	1	-	26	2	-	-		

This resignation influence is almost as widespread in 1988 as it was in 1985 and is very heavily subscribed to in the Serving Sample.

It is one of the mature yearnings which is unlikely to be satisfied during service life given that the military remains what it is. For 32 percent of the 1988 cohort it was of "most influence".

Table 23

Item 8		Desire to obtain pension benefits					
Degree of Influence	Resigners	1988		Serving		1985	
		f	%	f	%	f	%
None	102	53		367	26	119	57
Some	91	47		1042	72	90	43
Missing	-	-		-	-	-	-

There has been a slight but perceptible increase in the extent to which pension entitlements is reported as a resignation influence since 1985. For 20 percent of the 1988 resigners this factor was reportedly of "most influence". Only 10 percent of the serving sample group reported this.

The present writer has noted previously (1985b) that the extent of dissatisfaction with Service life appears to be more widespread amongst Serving members when compared with resigning members but the intensity with which resigning members reported on a few key items was the factor which appeared to distinguish the response patterns of resigners more clearly from those still serving.

Table 24

Item 12		Nonuse/misuse of professional skills					
Degree of Influence	Resigners	1988		1987		1985	
		f	%	f	%	f	%
None	92	48		165	12	14	35
Some	101	52		1248	86	136	65
Missing	-	-		25	2	-	-

There is quite a perceptible drop between the 1985 and the 1988 resigning cohorts reporting this factor to be of "some influence". Again the serving sample subscribes vociferously to this variable as a likely resignation

influence in their case (86 percent) but only 13 percent of that sample reported that it would be of "most influence" for them. By contrast 26 percent of actual resigners in 1988 reported this factor as being of "most influence" in their resignations.

Table 25

Item 11		Unattractiveness of likely future posting location or job					
Degree of Influence		1988		1987		1985	
		Resigners	Serving	Resigners	Serving	f	%
None		41	21	93	7	31	15
Some		151	78	1320	91	179	85
Missing		1	1	25	2	-	-

The overwhelming strength of this factor as an actual or potential influence upon resignation is evident across the board. Despite the high serving sample subscription to this as a potential resignation influence only 21 percent of that sample reported that this would be of "most influence" in their case. By contrast 41 percent of the 1988 resigning cohort reported this factor as actually being of "most influence" for them. This is a very strong result in the present context.

It is on this item that the serving and the 1988 resigning cohort appear most at variance. The "most" response represents an intensity dimension. Whilst the extent of the likely influence of unattractive postings on resignation is more widespread in the serving sample than in the 1988 resigning cohort (91 percent to 78 percent) the intensity of feeling in the resigning group is nearly twice that found in the serving sample.

Table 27

Item 10

Promotion expectations unlikely to be met

Degree of Influence	1988		1987		1985			
	Resigners	Serving	Resigners	Serving	Resigners	Serving		
f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
None	95	49	245	17	112	53		
Some	97	50	1168	81	97	46		
Missing	1	1	25	2	-	-		

There is only a slight increase in the 1988 figures over those from 1985. 21 percent of the 1988 resigners signified that this variable was of "most influence" as did 16 percent of the serving sample.

Table 28

Item 13

Desire to try talents in civilian life

Degree of Influence	1988		1987		1985			
	Resigners	Serving	Resigners	Serving	Resigners	Serving		
f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
None	57	30	236	16	60	29		
Some	136	70	1162	81	147	70		
Missing	-	-	40	3	-	-		

The proportions subscribing to this variable as being of "some influence" are equal in both resigning cohorts (70 percent). Of the 81 percent of the serving sample reporting item 12 as a factor of some influence, only 9 percent allocated it the status of "most influence". In contrast 32 percent of the 1988 resigning cohort rated it "most influence".

Table 29

Item 14 Perceived inability to contribute further to the RAN

	1988		1987		1985	
Degree of Influence	Resigners		Serving		Resigners	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
None	115	60	366	26	106	50
Some	78	40	1044	72	102	49
Missing	-	-	28	2	-	-

Subscription to this factor appears to have dwindled somewhat from 1985. 17 percent of the 1988 cohort report the factor as being of "most importance". Only 10 percent of the serving sample gave this reason as a "most important" likely influence.

Table 30

Item 15 Frustration with efforts to achieve within defence organization

	1988		1987		1985	
Degree of Influence	Resigners	%	Serving	%	Resigners	%
None	69	36	195	14	66	31
Some	123	63	1216	84	142	68
Missing	1	1	27	2	2	1

A slight percentage drop in extent of subscription to this resignation influence is visible between the 1985 and 1988 figure for resisters.

The 84 percent reporting "some influence" amongst the serving sample is tempered somewhat by the fact that only 14 percent accorded this variable the status of being of "most influence" in the same sample. 23 percent of the 1988 cohort voted this variable as being of "most influence" in their resignation.

Table 31

Item 16		Attraction of higher income outside of the RAN					
Degree of Influence		1988		1987		1985	
		Resigners	Serving	f	%	f	%
None		117	60	229	16	125	60
Some		75	39	1190	83	85	40
Missing		1	1	19	1	-	-

This variable was evidently perceived by roughly equal proportions of each resigning cohort as being of "some influence" on their resignation. Again serving subscription at the same degree of influence was very heavy (83 percent). However, only 12 percent of the serving sample saw higher civilian income likely to be of "most influence" in their prospective resignation. In the 1988 cohort 11 percent reported this factor as being of "most influence".

It is interesting to note that the attractions of higher civilian income outside of the Service was perceived of as being a factor of "some influence" in both resigning cohorts to less than half the extent that it was amongst the serving officers (viz 39/40 percent to 83 percent). Speculation might include the "greener fields" phenomenon.

Table 32
Item 17 Dissatisfaction with RAN housing scheme

		1988		1987		1985	
Degree of Influence		Resigners		Serving		Resigners	
		f	%	f	%	f	%
None		156	81	514	36	161	77
Some		36	18	895	62	49	23
Missing		1	1	29	2	-	-

There appears a slight tendency for these dissatisfactions to be less widespread amongst the 1988 resigning cohort than amongst their 1985 counterparts (18 percent to 23 percent).

Only 3 percent of the 1988 group allocated this factor the rank of "most important". However 6 resignations on such a specific and mundane-seeming basis would appear to be six resignations too many.

5 percent of the serving sample (70 respondents) forecast that Navy officer housing dissatisfactions would be of "most influence" in making a decision to separate, a regrettable and vexatious circumstance to say the least.

Unpublished Retention Survey data suggest that this item represents a factor of greater importance to those in their early career stages rather than those in their later career stages.

Table 33

Rank ordering of the ten most heavily endorsed resignation influences for 3 male RAN officer samples.

Section 2 items	1988 Resigners	1987 Serving	1985 Resigners
Poor future posting/job	1	1	1
Try talents in civilian life	2	5	3
Live in one location	3	8	2
Frustrations with DOD	4	3	4
Non-use of professional skills	5	2	5
Promotion unlikely	6	5	7
No more to contribute	7	9	6
Pension benefits	8	9	10
Childrens' education	9	-	9
Marital harmony	10	-	8
Higher civilian income	-	-	-
Pension uncertainty	-	7	-

There are two main features in the above data. One is the close similarity between the rankings for the two resigning cohorts on the resignation influences. The other is the variation between the rankings from the resigning cohorts and the rankings derived from the responses of the serving member sample. eg two resignation influences ranked highly by the resigners ("desire to try talents in civilian life" and "desire to live in one location") are ranked

lower by the serving officers. On the other hand, "non use of professional skills" which is ranked second in endorsement rate by the serving officer sample was accorded fifth ranking by each of the resigning cohorts.

"Childrens' education" and "marital harmony", ranked 8th and 9th by the resigners, did not appear in the serving hierarchy, being supplanted by "higher civilian income" and "pension uncertainty" neither of which appeared in the resignation scenario at this level.

Conclusions

It is apparent that, whatever similarities are apparent in the three sets of response patterns above (eg. all three samples accord "the prospect of future unattractive postings or jobs" the highest ranking as a career "turnoff") the attitudes of two different populations are being sampled. If reasons for resignations are sought after, reasons which discriminate between those officers who come to resign and other officers, the clearest answer from the above data appears to be the desire to live in one location and the desire to try one's talents in civilian life. Serving officers report these as being much less important than do resigning officers. However, such a conclusion is of academic value only. Postings/movements literally define service employment and as such are largely non-negotiable. Neither do these or any of the other resignation influences listed possess any potential for forecasting resignation with the possible exception of the "promotion" variable and the attraction for civilian life, despite earlier speculations (Salas 1985b).

Any future survey of the response patterns of resigning Navy officers to the same array of "resigning influences" is likely to show little if any variation from the 1985 and 1988 patterns. However, the data from the ORQ have not yet been analysed from all view points. Salas (1895b) showed how certain resignation reasons are more salient than others at different age levels by comparing response patterns of those younger than 30 years of age with those older. Such insights provide modest increments to the small sum of objective evidence existing about officer resignation behaviour and the data should continue to be combed over in search of additional contributions to knowledge in the area.

For instance, the respondent who reports the influence "the belief that you cannot achieve any further significant contribution to the RAN" as being of "most importance" in his decision to resign calls up for the present writer a mental picture of a senior retainer who has sacrificed all in a lifetime of commitment to furthering RAN objectives and who now seeks rest from the battle.

However unpublished Retention Study data for this item shows that it reported more frequently amongst those in Early career (1 to 12 years) than those in later career stages, suggesting that there is a deal yet to be understood about the meaning of some, if not all, of the ORQ items to individuals and to sub-groups of officers. Some greater depth has now been given to the ORQ by the inclusion of additional selected items. The revised ORQ is discussed below.

The Revised Officer Resignation Questionnaire (ORQ)

The original ORQ was devised by the RAAF Psychology Service and it has been used by them, unaltered, since about 1981 (Groothius, 1982).

The present report is the third from the hand of the present writer based upon RAN officer data gathered using the original RAAF ORQ.

Whilst the integrity of the original 17 or so RAAF items has been maintained in the present RAN ORQ and given the data base now to hand, hopefully will continue to be so, additions have occurred.

Some are from DNOP, others were suggested by the present writer. Others were adopted from Army sources (Ritchie, 1984).

After the 1985 ORQ analysis and following the lead of the Army revision of the ORQ, a 7 item subscale was added which recognized the existence of female members.

Attitudes towards personnel management, job satisfaction and career prospects are now tested by including appropriate items. These items were initially used in the Naval Officer Retention Survey and they there indicated likely areas of officer disaffection linked to resignation behaviour.

Items 18 to 23 of the ORQ, listed below, are unique to the questionnaire used on the 1988 cohort. No counterparts are available either from the 1988 cohort or the 1987 Retention sample. They are listed under "Reasons for Resignation".

Table 34

Item 18

Dissatisfaction with personnel management

1988

Degree of

Influence	f	%
None	64	33
Some	72	37
Most	57	30
Missing		

Table 35

Item 20

Dissatisfaction with current career prospects

1988

Degree of

Influence	f	%
None	53	27
Some	67	35
Most	71	37
Missing	2	1

Table 36

Item 21 Dissatisfaction with financial conditions

1988		
Degree of Influence	f	%
None	107	55
Some	59	31
Most	20	10
Missing	7	4

Table 37

Item 22 Lack of job satisfaction

1988		
Degree of Influence	f	%
None	92	48
Some	48	25
Most	53	27
Missing	-	-

Table 38

Item 23 General dissatisfaction with Navy life

1988		
Degree of Influence	f	%
None	119	62
Some	57	29
Most	16	8
Missing	1	1

Table 39

Ranking of Section 2 items reported as being of "Most Influence" amongst Reasons for Resignation. (includes 3 new items).

1988 Cohort

Rank	Most		Reason
	f	%	
1	80	41	Unattractiveness of likely future posting locations or job.
2	71	37	Dissatisfaction with current career prospects
3	62	32	Desire to live in one location
3	62	32	Try talents in civilian life
5	57	30	Dissatisfaction with personnel management
6	53	27	Lack of job satisfaction
7	51	26	Non use/misuse of professional skills
8	46	23	Frustration with Defence organization
9	40	21	Promotion expectations unlikely to be met
10	38	20	Desire to obtain pension benefits
11	33	17	Nothing more to contribute to Navy
11	33	17	Posting turbulence (childrens'education)
13	27	14	Spouse's attitude to the Service

1985 Cohort (from Salas (1985))

Rank	
1	Unattractiveness of likely future posting/job
2	Desire to live in one location
3	Try talents in civilian life
4	Frustrations with Defence organization
5	Non use/misuse of professional skills
6	Nothing more to contribute to Navy
7	Promotion expectations unlikely to be met

Reasons for Resignation

There was practically no variation between the resigning cohort of 1988 and that of 1985 in terms of their rank ordering of the importance of resignation variables. "Unattractiveness of likely future postings or jobs" still ranks highest, followed by "desire to live in one location" second place.

However, with the inclusion of extra questions on the 1988 ORQ the "one location" variable became displaced to third ranking by one of the new items viz "dissatisfaction with career prospects". When 1988 respondents were asked to indicate to which of all the resignation reasons they would give greatest weight for them, the following rank order resulted:

- a Dissatisfaction with career prospects
- b Dissatisfaction with the quality of personnel management
- c Unattractiveness of likely future posting locations /jobs
- d Misuse/non-use of professional skills

A summary of other response patterns follows.

Summary of Response Patterns 1988 vs 1985

No change from 1985 figure

- a spouses' education
- b childrens' education
- c try talents in civilian life
- d attraction of civilian income

Factors Showing an Increase in 1988 over 1985

- a spouses' employment (8%)
- b desire to live in one location (5%)
- c promotion expectations not met (4%)

Factors Showing Decrease in 1988 over 1985

- a marital harmony (11%)
- b non-use of professional skills (13%)
- c unattractive future postings (7%)
- d no further contribution to make (9%)
- e frustration with DOD (5%)
- f RAN housing (5%)

Comment

A number of new items were included in the ORQ answered by the 1988 cohort. These were unavailable to the 1985 resigners.

If these particular items are excluded from the 1988 ranking of Reasons for Resignation it is evident that the 1988 and the 1985 sets of ranking are virtually the same.

However, it is also evident that the inclusion of the new items has given the opportunity for officers to widen their range of opinions and to contribute fresh information.

For example, although "dissatisfaction with future likely postings" reigns supreme as the No 2 ranked Reason for Resignation the perennial "desire to live in one location" has been displaced to third by the new item "dissatisfaction with current career prospects".

The new inclusions of "personnel management" and "job satisfaction" have also been ranked ahead of the "non-use/misuse" "frustrations" and "promotion" items of 1985.

Table 40

Item 32

If you have given more than one item above a score of three, indicate to which statement, if any, you would give the greatest weight.

1988 (n = 193)

Item 20	Dissatisfaction with current career prospects (f = 17, 9%)
Item 18	Dissatisfaction with the quality of personnel management (f = 15, 8%)
Item 11	Unattractiveness of likely future posting location or job (f = 11, 6%)
Item 7	Mis-use/non-use of professional skills (f = 11, 6%)
Missing	(f = 52, 27%)

The high ranking shown above for two of the newly introduced "reasons for resignation" to the ORQ appears to have justified their inclusion. This latter appears, in one instance, to have been overdue (attitudes to management).

Dissatisfaction with personnel/career management is a standard, perennial grievance amongst service men and women (unpublished RAN and Army Survey research data).

Review

The comparison of the resigning cohorts appears to have yielded unique data of interest to management on manpower trends, most of which would not have been obtainable from the existing DNMP data base.

The inclusion of three new items in the RAN Officer Resignation Questionnaire appears to have been a useful exercise. It has provided information confirming some of the results of the Retention Survey especially in regards to the extent of the effect of attitudes to Navy personnel management held by the Navy Officer Corps.

The revamping of length of service periods into career stages seems to have been justified by the 1988 resigner analysis. The results obtained are interesting seen in the light of current academic wisdom and appear to possess heuristic possibilities.

REASONS FOR RESIGNATION

Please examine the statements below and indicate with a score in the appropriate box how much influence each of these factors has contributed to your decision to resign from the RAN.

SECTION 2

- a. - No influence on decision (Score 1)
- b. - Some influence (Score 2)
- c. - Of most influence (Score 3)

(NOTE: Single officers are to ignore Items 1 to 6).

1. Effects of posting turbulence on spouse's education.
2. Effects of posting turbulence on spouse's employment.
3. Effects of posting turbulence on marital harmony.
4. Effects of posting turbulence on childrens' education
(omit this item if you have no children).
5. Other personal or domestic effects of posting turbulence (specify):
6. Spouse's attitude to your RAN Service.
7. Desire to live in one location.
8. Desire to obtain DFRDB Benefits.
9. Uncertainty about future policy on DFRDB Benefits.
10. Promotion expectations unlikely to be met.

11. Unattractiveness of likely future posting location or jobs.
12. Non-use or misuse of your professional skills.
13. Desire to try your talents in a civilian environment.
14. Belief that you cannot achieve any further significant contribution to RAN.
15. Frustration with efforts to achieve perceived RAN objectives within current Defence organisational system.
16. Attraction of higher income if out of RAN.
17. Dissatisfaction with RAN Housing Scheme.
18. Dissatisfaction with the quality of Navy personnel management.
19. The attraction of higher income outside the Navy.
20. Dissatisfaction with your current career prospects.
21. Dissatisfaction with financial conditions of service (specify):
22. Lack of job satisfaction.
23. General dissatisfaction with Navy life.

MALE OFFICERS OMIT FOLLOWING ITEMS 24 TO 30 AND GO TO QUESTION 31

24. Pregnancy.
25. Have offspring and can't mix child rearing with a Navy career.
26. Consider amount of maternity leave is inadequate.
27. Posting with spouse/partner is not possible.
28. Restricted career options because of limitations placed on the employment of Service women.

29. Frustrated with having to cope with traditional male Service attitudes towards females.
30. Have married or intend marrying a non-commissioned serviceman and am concerned about the Service's attitude to this.
31. Any other reason not covered above (including seatime):
32. If you have given more than one item statement a score of 3, indicate to which statement, if any, you would give the greatest weight.
33. Have you ever considered resigning before.
34. On which list were you originally commissioned (GL, SD, SL, etc)?
35. In general terms, how closely related is your prospective civilian job to your Navy training and past Navy career?
36. If you have no specific job to go to upon resignation, what is your likely future main source of income?
37. Which of your particular skills or talents do you feel that the Navy has under-used or mis-used?
38. At your present career point, what would constitute (for you) an unattractive posting?
39. (TO BE ANSWERED ONLY BY OFFICERS OF 30 YEARS OF AGE OR UNDER).

What are the main general factors prohibiting you making the RAN a permanent career?

Annex 2

Table A

Resigning Cohort from the
1987 Retention Survey Sample

Length of Service (years)	Career Stage	%
0-12	Early	32
13-15	Early Middle	5
16-19	Late Middle	15
20+	Late	48

(n = 148)

This sample of 148 individuals are those who actually resigned over a period of 12 months from the end of the Retention Survey. It was used to validate the predictions of the Resignation Propensity Scale (Salas 1988).

Officer Resignation Survey (Army)*The First Year

The following table shows the percentage of respondents who indicated that a factor was of moderate to very considerable influence on their decision to leave the Army. The items are arranged in descending order by percentage. The figure in column N indicates the total number of respondents who found the item applicable to them (out of 290).

Table 1
Section 2 Reasons for Leaving

<u>Item</u> (a)	<u>%</u> (b)	<u>N</u> (c)
13. Future types of jobs	71.5	271
01. The effect of moving home on your childrens' education	69.9	186
25. Army career management	67.0	276
09. A desire to stay in one place	65.3	271
15. Desire to try talents in civilian employment	63.7	256
21. Desire to live in your own home	62.6	254
40. Limited career options for servicewomen	60.7	28
11. Future work locations	58.8	260
27. Your expectations of the Army	58.1	271
07. Entitlement to commutation benefits	57.8	213

* (reproduced, with permission, from Hodge, B.J. Officer Resignation Survey. The First Year. Research Note 4/88 1 Psych Research Unit, Canberra ACT.)

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